

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

**This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:**

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (currently amended): A rubber composition for a tread characterized by compounding (a) 5-40 parts by mass of a softening agent including an oil in which an extraction quantity with dimethylsulfoxide (DMSO) by IP346 process is controlled to less than 3% by mass and (b) 5-40 parts by mass of a liquid polymer having a viscosity average molecular weight of 45,000-100,000 based on 100 parts by mass of a rubber component,

wherein the softening agent (a) further contains a hydrogenated naphthenic oil and asphalt wherein the asphalt contains an asphaltene component not more than 5% by mass of the asphalt, and

~~the oil is at least one process oil selected from the group consisting of T DAE and MES.~~

2. (original): A rubber composition for a tread according to claim 1, wherein the viscosity average molecular weight of the liquid polymer is 55,000-85,000.

3. (previously presented): A rubber composition for a tread according to claim 1, wherein the liquid polymer is a liquid styrene-butadiene copolymer.

4.-5. (canceled).

6. (previously presented): A rubber composition for a tread according to claim 1, wherein the hydrogenated naphthenic oil is obtained by hydrogenating a naphthenic oil in which a content of naphthenic hydrocarbon (%CN) measured according to ASTM D2140 is not less than 30.

7. (currently amended): A rubber composition for a tread according to claim 1, wherein the ~~softening agent (a) further contains asphalt having has~~ a dynamic viscosity at 120°C of not more than 300 mm<sup>2</sup>/sec and ~~an asphaltene content of not more than 5% by mass at a mass ratio of hydrogenated naphthenic oil/asphalt is of 95/5-5/95.~~

8. (previously presented): A tire characterized by using a rubber composition as claimed in claim 1 in a tread.

9. (previously presented): A rubber composition for a tread according to claim 2, wherein the liquid polymer is a liquid styrene-butadiene copolymer.

10. (currently amended): A rubber composition for a tread according to claim 6, wherein the ~~softening agent (a) further contains asphalt having has~~ a dynamic viscosity at 120°C of not more than 300 mm<sup>2</sup>/sec and ~~an asphaltene content of not more than 5% by mass at a mass ratio of hydrogenated naphthenic oil/asphalt is of 95/5-5/95.~~

11. (previously presented): A tire characterized by using a rubber composition as claimed in claim 2 in a tread.

12. (previously presented): A tire characterized by using a rubber composition as claimed in claim 3 in a tread.

13. -14. (canceled).

15. (previously presented): A tire characterized by using a rubber composition as claimed in claim 6 in a tread.

16. (previously presented): A tire characterized by using a rubber composition as claimed in claim 7 in a tread.

17. (previously presented): A tire characterized by using a rubber composition as claimed in claim 9 in a tread.

18. (previously presented): A tire characterized by using a rubber composition as claimed in claim 10 in a tread.

19. (new): A rubber composition for a tread characterized by compounding (a) 5-40 parts by mass of a softening agent including an oil in which an extraction quantity with dimethylsulfoxide (DMSO) by IP346 process is controlled to less than 3% by mass and (b) 5-40 parts by mass of a liquid polymer having a viscosity average molecular weight of 45,000-100,000 based on 100 parts by mass of a rubber component,

wherein the softening agent (a) further contains a hydrogenated naphthenic oil and asphalt wherein the asphalt contains an asphaltene component not more than 5% by mass of the asphalt, and

the oil is at least one process oil selected from the group consisting of T-DAE and MES.

20. (new): A rubber composition for a tread according to claim 19, wherein the rubber composition contains not less than 13 parts by mass of hydrogenated naphthenic oil and asphalt based on 100 parts by mass of a rubber component.

21. (new): A tire characterized by using a rubber composition as claimed in claim 19 in a tread.

22. (new): A tire characterized by using a rubber composition as claimed in claim 20 in a tread.